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ANTHROPOS ANARCHOS

What is Anarcho-Anthroposophy or Anthroposophical
Anarchism?

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and self-sacrificing actions. He believed in the best in humanity because he had discovered this within himself.

This is where we find anarchism in its highest form.

Tarjei Straume

The Ordinary Rudolf Steiner

Serious opposition against Rudolf Steiner and his work occurred early, but the antagonism increased considerably after the first world war, when Steiner spoke about social Threefolding. The strongest and best organized opposition came from nationalist quarters, especially in England and Germany.

Rudolf Steiner made himself guilty of a kind of cultural heresy that has never been forgiven him, neither by his own time nor by posterity. Principally speaking, this heresy is no different from e.g. Galileo Galilei's efforts to demonstrate his vision of the planetary orbits around the sun. Steiner wished that spiritual science, or Anthroposophy, should achieve the status of an acknowledged science on par with chemistry, botany, geology, etc. In his own time, he was met with direct attacks, while posterity has stonewalled him with silence. He is not only conspicuous by his absence in most philosophical, scientific, and religious reference works, but also in most New Age bibliographies.

There is only one aspect of Steiner that has proven to be unassailable, and that is his personal character. The collection of letters and other documentation convey a portrait of an immensely good and warm human being who in an unselfish manner made limitless demands upon himself. It probably appears incomprehensible for many people that a man who argued that a free spirit had to liberate itself even from the tyranny of conscience could be a thoroughly good and selfless person. A major argument against anarchism is that it will entail unencumbered evil and egoism. Throughout his years, Steiner placed a lot of emphasis on laying the foundation for the development of "moral impulses" and "moral imagination." By this he meant that the really free spirit would gain increasingly greater inner freedom by using the imagination for loving

What is anarcho-anthroposophy or anthroposophical anarchism? There is a lot of disagreement going around about who have the right to call themselves anarchists and who don't. In such discussions the claim has occasionally been made that dialectical materialism is the only acceptable belief for anarchists.

This excludes every religious coloring, including Tao anarchism,¹ the philosophy of Gandhi,² and Christos Anarchos.³ Although all anarchists reject the Communist dictatorship of the proletariat, there are a few who cling to an almost mandatory atheism. There is little room for spiritual freedom in their utopia. This is an important point of departure when we are going to approach Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy as a branch of anarchist philosophy.

Even though Steiner was a declared enemy of economic liberalism, he appears to be a libertarian individualist with special sympathies for rabid egoists like Max Stirner and Benjamin Tucker. Because of his spiritually oriented world view, he displayed a certain distaste for Marxism. This was in spite of, or perhaps precisely because, Steiner himself had his roots in the proletariat, and never became a wealthy man. It was his conviction that what he had to offer the working class was a liberation of each individual through self-consciousness, while the socialists lulled the workers to sleep with their materialistic propaganda and their dictatorial party platforms.

"Rudolf Steiner was a child of poor people," writes Christoph Lindenberg. "He never made big deal out of his parents' poverty; he usually only mentions in passing the humble conditions he grew up in. But one time, during a discussion in 1919, when a person who knew poverty only through what he had heard, began to lecture about how low-paid postal employees

24. Zeylman's book was published in Holland in 1932.

¹ Zen & taoisme, frihetlige filosofier fra øst, Gateavisa no. 146.

² Mahatma Gandhi - den myke revolusjonære, Gateavisa no. 149.

³ i.e.. Christian anarchism (*Christos Anarchos*) Gateavisa no. 151.

lived, Steiner burst out: 'I have learned to understand the proletarians by living with them myself, by having grown out of the proletariat, by having learned to starve with proletarians.'⁴

Rudolf Steiner

Rudolf Steiner was born on February 27 1861 in Kraljevec, a small bordertown on the island Murr in Hungary (later Yugoslavia, then Croatia), and grew up in Austria. After the breakup from the Theosophical Society, he founded the Anthroposophical Society in 1913 in Dornach, Switzerland, where he died in his study on March 30 1925.

"Anthroposophically oriented spiritual science" is very comprehensive and constitutes the background for Waldorf schools, the theory about the Threefold Social Order, biodynamic farming, alternative medicine, and an obscure New Age religiosity that has influenced a number of poets and authors. Many anarchists find such a supersensible conception of reality difficult to digest, especially because Anthroposophy is the most misunderstood of all "New Age" varieties.

The core of anthroposophical philosophy is thoroughly anarchistic. This is not so easy to discern, because Rudolf Steiner's basic view can be very challenging to get to the bottom of. Most anthroposophists choose what appeals to them and suppress the rest. Most overlooked of all is the anarchism. This is why we have seen so many authority-loving and power-hungry bourgeois anthroposophists who have not discovered that they are sitting on a revolutionary megabomb.

Rudolf Steiner's works comprise over 340 volumes in the German original. Most of these consist of short hand transcripts from his approximately 6000 lectures. This work can mainly be divided into two groups: First his written philosoph-

⁴ *Die soziale Frage*, GA #328, s. 167, *Rudolf Steiner mit Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten dargestellt von Christoph Lindenberg*.

crucial about Rudolf Steiner should be mentioned, namely that he never disavowed anything he had expressed earlier. When he wrote in his magazine in 1898 that he was an individualistic anarchist, it means that this is precisely what he was - through his whole life!

In 1897, he met with his friends in the restaurant Zur Alten Künstlerklausur in Berlin, where he frequently ended up sitting far into the morning hours. Max Halbe recalls "Steiner's external image, his coalblack hair, his flashing black eyes, the hollow-cheeked face, the skinny buttoned-up shape, kind of black in black altogether in the strange mixture of adept and daemon."¹⁹

This description alone makes of Steiner a striking representative for the black flag of anarchism. F. W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven's portrayal of his meeting with Steiner in 1920, when the man was almost sixty years old, is almost neckbreaking:

"The eyes recede deeply under the shadow of the heavy brows. One might say that these eyes are dark brown, but that would tell very little of their true nature. How can we describe them? Sometimes they appear unfathomable. One looks into them as into an abyss, standing dazzled at the brink. At other times it is a depth like a dark night, when no stars are visible, yet their presence is felt."²⁰

Rudolf Steiner was himself never in the military, and when his architectural masterpiece Das Goethanum was arsoned on New Year's Eve 1922 (probably by the hostile opponents of the movement) and burned to the ground, he insisted that the misdeed should not be reported or investigated. He spoke on several occasions about how spiritually free people of the future will learn to refrain from reacting to evil or infringements. He did not wish, however, to combine his ethical individualism with a socio-political or moral set of rules.

¹⁹ Max Halbe: *Jahrhundertwende*, Danzig 1942, p. 183.

²⁰ *Journal for Anthroposophy* #44, *An Encounter with Rudolf Steiner*, p.

"To speak of freedom seemed extremely dangerous," he said thirteen years later. The socialist leaders planted four of their members in a meeting with hundreds of students where Steiner defended spiritual values, and these made sure that he was driven out by making it impossible for him to continue. When Steiner said, "If people wish socialism to play a part in future evolution, then liberty of teaching and liberty of thought must be permitted," one of the stooges sent by the party leadership declared: "In our party and its schools there can be no question of freedom, but only of reasonable constraint."

To this remark, Steiner added the following comment: "One must not imagine that the modern proletariat is not thirsting for spiritual nourishment! It has an insatiable craving for it. But the nourishment which it is offered is, in part, that in which it firmly believes, namely positivism, scientific materialism, or in part an indigestible pabulum that offers stones instead of bread!"¹⁷

One of these students, Emil Unger-Winkelried, remembered Steiner as teacher 30 years later: "For us students, especially us working class students, he was an sacrifice-willing friend who taught at the workers' school two evenings a week through approximately five years. A so many-faceted gifted man like Steiner most certainly did not stay with this tiresome teaching because of the lousy fee, but because it gave him joy, and the students adored him."¹⁸

Bourgeois Anthroposophy

Bourgeois philosophy dominates anthroposophical culture to a remarkable degree. This is an incredibly paradoxical phenomenon, because as we have seen, *The Philosophy of Freedom* is nothing short of pure anarchism. In this connection, something

¹⁷ *Geschichtliche Symptomatologie*, 6. lecture, GA #185.

¹⁸ Emil Unger-Winkelried, 1934.

ical works from the 1880's and the 1890's, among these his pioneering "The Philosophy of Freedom" (1894), which he claimed 30 years later would survive all his other works, and which lays the foundation for esoteric (spiritual-philosophical) anarchism.

The second group of his works consists of everything he communicated after the turn of the century, i.e. from 1900 until 1925, and which makes up over 90 per cent of anthroposophical literature.

Steiner's critique of Marx and Engels and their dialectical materialism has a central place in anarchist anthroposophy. This dialectical materialism did not only exert its influence on Communism, but in a camouflaged manner also on latter-day capitalism (because of its relationship to social Darwinism). In addition, it has been a strong factor in socialist-anarchist thinking and is therefore the main reason for the tension between atheist-collectivist anarchist thinking on the one hand and freedom-individualistic anarchism on the other.

When evaluating Steiner in the light of the history of anarchism, it is necessary to put special weight upon his major philosophical work *The Philosophy of Freedom*. It is only the second group of Steiner's communications, i.e. his books and lectures after the turn of the century, that are often ridiculed or are experienced as offensive because of their controversial character. This was when he had decided to speak up openly about the supersensory knowledge he had acquired as a result of his inborn highly unusual states of consciousness.

Anthroposophical literature originating from the period 1900-1925 requires a spiritual orientation, or cast of mind, where every concept of faith in the traditional sense is sacrificed in favor of results yielded by scientific research, while at the same time powers of cognition with religious characteristics beyond the intellect are applied. It is very difficult for someone who does not possess this cast of mind to accept Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophically oriented spiritual science. Steiner encourages trust in terms of an open and at the same time crit-

ical mind, but he cautions very strongly against regarding his person as an authority or his communications as authoritative. The cultivation of Rudolf Steiner as an authority among super-bourgeois and subservient anthroposophists is, ipso facto, in violation of the principles of freedom inherent in Anthroposophy.

We are here in touch with the most vulnerable paradox for anthroposophists with regard to critical objections. The whole thing is about an enormously rich body of knowledge which is the result of Rudolf Steiner's occult research. Steiner emphasizes expressly on repeated occasions that nothing must be accepted on authority alone in our time. Everything must be scrutinized and verified empirically. How is this possible, we must ask, when the research itself requires supersensory organs, powers, and abilities that Rudolf Steiner alone and nobody else did or does possess?

This objection is so weighty and sensible that most bourgeois anthroposophists get cold feet when they are confronted with a problem of this nature. They either explain it all away by denying the paradox completely, or they renounce any identification with Steiner's representation, especially in the religious field. Anthroposophy leads not only to anarchism, but also to esoteric Christianity and to Buddhism. Because of this, the tragicomical situation arises when in public debates, one frequently gets clearer and more accurate descriptions of Anthroposophy from atheist or Christian opponents than from the anthroposophists themselves, who do everything in their power to explain away and befog the whole thing.

With the fact in mind that the undersigned considers himself an anarcho-anthroposophist, an approximate response to the objection mentioned above may be in order. In the first place, it should be pointed out that although Steiner did not want to be regarded as an authority, he did accept that many viewed him as a guide or light bearer. Immediately following the turn of the century, he published his observations from

also offered instruction in public speaking, and corrected all papers submitted to him with such care that many of the students really accomplished things which previously could never have been expected of them.¹⁵

In his autobiography, Steiner explains the phenomenon in this way:

"It must be remembered that there are partial truths in the materialistic ideas on economy which are absorbed by the workers through Marxism as 'material history.' And these partial truths are just what can easily be understood by the workers. Had I simply ignored them and taught history from an idealistic point of view, the workers would have sensed that what I said was not in agreement with the partial truths they knew.

"So I started from a fact that was understandable to my listeners. I explained why it is nonsense to speak of economic forces dominating history prior to the sixteenth century, as Karl Marx does. I also showed that economic life did not take on a form that can be understood in a Marxistic sense until the sixteenth century, and that this process reached its climax in the nineteenth century.

"This made it possible for me to speak quite factually about the spiritual ideals at work in the preceding epochs of history, and I could show that in more recent times these impulses have weakened, in contrast to the material-economic ones.

"Thus the workers gradually arrived at concrete ideas about the spiritual impulses in history, religion, art and morality, and ceased to regard them as mere ideology. It would have been useless to enter into a controversy about materialism; I had to let idealism arise out of materialism."¹⁶

After five years, the whole thing came to a close when the Party leadership put an end to Steiner's tuition. He encountered strongest opposition each time he spoke about freedom.

¹⁵ Stewart Easton: Rudolf Steiner, Herald of a New Epoch, p. 101.

¹⁶ Mein Lebensgang, GA #28, ch. 28.

was so extremely modest that they doubted he could accept the request.

In his autobiography, Steiner tells as follows: "I made it clear to the directors that if I accepted the task I would present history according to my own views of mankind's evolution and not according to the Marxist interpretation as was now customary in Socialist circles. They still wished me to give the courses."

"These people knew physical work and the results it produces. But they had no idea of the spiritual powers that guide mankind forward through history. That was why they so readily accepted Marxism and its 'materialistic interpretation of history.' Marxism maintains that the only forces at work in history are material and economic, that is, forces produced through physical work. Any 'spiritual, cultural factors' are considered to be a byproduct arising out of the material-economic sphere, a mere ideology.

"Added to this was the fact that for a long time the workers had felt a growing eagerness for education. But the only means available for satisfying this need was the popular materialistic literature on science. It was the only literature slanted to the workers' outlook and reasoning. Anything else was written in a style the workers could not possibly understand. Thus the unspeakably tragic situation arose that while the growing proletariat had an intense craving for knowledge, this could be satisfied only through the grossest form of materialism."¹⁴

History was a "special child of sorrow" to Arbeiterbildungsschule. The students became rapidly bored with the way the subject was taught, and most of them ceased to attend - whereupon the lecturers usually gave up. Steiner, however, made success with the students. Later on he went on to lecture on German literature, on Indian, Persian and Arabic culture, on the history of philosophy, chemistry, and the history of industrialism. He

¹⁴ *Mein Lebensgang*, GA #28, ch. 28.

the so-called Akasha Chronicle in a magazine of his own that he called *Luzifer-Gnosis*, or The Light Bearer's Wisdom. He pointed out that the prostrate propensity among most people to submit themselves to authorities of all kinds represents a serious obstacle to the development of freedom in our time. It is understandable, therefore, that many anthroposophists don't understand the difference between a guide and a source of information on the one hand, and an authority on the other.

One question arising here is to what extent anarchists should permit themselves to have guides at all. We are living in a complex entanglement of mutually dependent relationships, and as long as each individual evaluates freely the credibility and sensibility of every single source, there is no question of authority. For an anarchist, therefore, Steiner can be as relevant as Bakunin, Proudhon, Stirner, or Tolstoy.

As guide, Steiner claimed that anybody could expand the abilities he or she already possessed. To this end, he published a series of books with detailed exercises and advice. There are yet many reasons to believe that Steiner may have overestimated his contemporaries in several fields.

Steiner thought the claims he presented as occult facts could be followed up and tested to a certain extent without advanced clairvoyance, or "initiation." Inner experiences cultivated with sharpened powers of thought, observations of external phenomena that most people overlook, historical documents, etc. - all this could be used to affirm or invalidate Steiner's communications. When one developed real occult abilities later, e.g. by working with the guide's communications, one could do one's own research as well, also in unknown territories.

The Philosophy of Freedom and the epistemology of anarchism

Epistemology is the science about the origin and boundaries of human knowledge, and which methods we use to reach it. It is a branch of research that traditionally belongs to the realm of philosophy. Steiner's doctoral thesis, which was published in Weimar in 1892 with the title, *Truth and Knowledge: An Introduction to "The Philosophy of Freedom,"* presents an epistemological critique of Kant. With German idealists like Fichte, Schiller, Hegel, Goethe, and to a certain degree also Nietzsche, editing of Darwin, plus critique of Bacon, Newton, Copernicus og Galileo as his point of departure, Steiner wished to establish a solid epistemological foundation for everything he communicated after the turn of the century, first as Theosophy, later as Anthroposophy.

In *The Philosophy of Freedom*, Steiner challenges the dualists and argues that a realistic epistemology must lead to an unequivocal monism. The most influential dualist in the German speaking world was Immanuel Kant, who divided existential reality in two by alleging that a reality existed which could not be experienced and which would forever have to remain hidden from human powers of cognition. This type of dualism is still making deep tracks in our culture and in mainstream philosophical orientation. With dualism as our point of departure, we speak about "the unknown," "the beyond," "God," "aliens," etc. Kant called this unknown "the thing in itself" and postulated that the real essence of natural phenomena was located in a hidden world that nobody had experienced or could ever experience.

Steiner alleged that this beyond unknown was the product of sheer superstition. He argued that the philosophical sciences could take only one reality into consideration, namely the empirical one. This was what he called monism. He found the

drawn their authority so that we shall become mature and self-dependent enough to make it on our own. The gods are in other words anarchists. The free spirit in man, the anarchist soul, is the goal and purpose of creation.

Steiner's theism may seem self-contradictory in relation to monism, which takes only the empirical world into consideration. This was no problem for the initiated occultist, considering the fact that all his statements were based upon supersensory research. Traditional religion, on the other hand, is dualistic because phenomena beyond man's empirical potential become objects of blind faith.

Collision with Marx

Rudolf Steiner could never accept Marxism, which spread like fire in a haystack at the turn of the century. Jens Bjørneboe did call himself an anarchist, Marxist, and anthroposophist and is supposed to have claimed that no contradiction existed between Steiner and Marx, but in that case, he was thoroughly mistaken. Steiner criticized Karl Marx on many points on different occasions, especially with regard to his dialectical-materialistic interpretation of history.

When Steiner was working primarily with the idealism of freedom and anarchism together with Tucker and Mackay, he wrote an article where he critically confronted the problem of power: "Of all forms of power, what is being striven for by social democracy, is the worst."¹³ By "social democracy" was meant the Communist ideology at that time.

Six months later, Steiner received a request from the administration of Arbeiterbildungsschule in Berlin (founded by the Marxist Wilhelm Liebknecht) to take over the history classes. He threw himself into the task with great enthusiasm, in spite of the fact that the school could only afford to pay him a fee that

¹³ *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte 1887-1901*, GA 31

Bourgeois Steiner-biographers describe this period as a little sidestep, as a passing flirt with anarchism, and they interpret the last quote as a goodbye between Steiner and anarchism. This is where the anarcho-anthroposophists protest. Because it is just as correct to present Anthroposophy as the next stage in the evolution of anarchism and to claim that Steiner is the one who makes anarchism a real possibility with *The Philosophy of Freedom*. The anarcho-anthroposophists' argument is, therefore, that the genuine anarchism is to be found precisely in Anthroposophy, which is and remains a heretical counter-culture and a rebellious dropout-society, regardless of how various members of the fine-cultural super-bourgeoisie wish to decorate the situation.

When one takes the anthroposophical theism into consideration, i.e. the entire doctrine about the supersensory hierarchies, the Christology, etc. that dominates the second part of Rudolf Steiner's comprehensive life work, it may seem puzzling that he embraced Darwinism, which in many ways has become the basic philosophy of modern atheism. When the spiritual worlds, with all their gods, demons, departed souls, etc., lay wide open for Rudolf Steiner from his earliest childhood, we must allow ourselves to ask: Is it possible at all for a person like that to appreciate atheism, to understand it?

Human freedom, the inviolable sovereignty of the individual - this was Steiner's basic philosophical point of departure. It was precisely on the premises of freedom that he praised Nietzsche, Stirner, and Tucker. Steiner claimed, paradoxically enough for many people, that traditional religious ideas in terms of theology and the like, belong to a bygone age and must yield to self-dependent thinking, totally independent of external or internal authority.

The paradox here is Steiner's considerable contribution to Christian theology, which was, however, a result of special requests. Even his theism is thoroughly anarchistic. The innumerable gods are man's creators, but they have now with-

most reliable point of departure for this monism in Charles Darwin's natural science, which at that time was being elaborated further by Ernst Haeckel. Furthermore, he had discovered that Goethe's research in botanics, biology, anatomy, light, and color was pioneering and demonstrated among other things that Isaac Newton's theory of color had been a sidetrack. This monism still represents cultural heresy in philosophy and in natural science alike.

The Philosophy of Freedom aims to demonstrate that monism is an absolute presupposition for perfect, unencumbered spiritual freedom. If we shall be capable of liberating ourselves completely from all coercion and authority, internal and external, physical and metaphysical, we cannot remain in a dualistic world that hides ghosts we can never approach. We must call on monism's help to tear down those limitations that the dominant dualistic culture has enforced upon human cognition like some kind of occult permanent boundary.

In this way, monism wishes to enable the development of unencumbered free will as well as the cognition that the potential of human empiricism is unlimited. *The Philosophy of Freedom* has as its goal, therefore, to define the presuppositions for free action.

In order to develop the "free spirit," Steiner argued that one would have to liberate oneself from inner and outer tyranny alike. In the tenth chapter, *Freedom - Philosophy and Monism*, Steiner defines the difference between "naïve realism" and "metaphysical realism." Naïve realism is bound by sensory authorities:

"The naïve man, who acknowledges as real only what he can see with his eyes and grasp with his hands, requires for his moral life, also, a basis for action that shall be perceptible to the senses. He requires someone or something to impart the basis for his action to him in a way that his senses can understand. He is ready to allow this basis for action to be dictated to him as commandments by any man whom he considers wiser

or more powerful than himself, or whom he acknowledges for some other reason to be a power over him. In this way there arise, as moral principles, the authority of family, state, society, church and God, as previously described. A man who is very narrow minded still puts his faith in some one person; the more advanced man allows his moral conduct to be dictated by a majority (state, society). It is always on perceptible powers that he builds. The man who awakens at last to the conviction that basically these powers are human beings as weak as himself, seeks guidance from a higher power, from a Divine Being, whom he endows, however, with sense perceptible features. He conceives this Being as communicating to him the conceptual content of his moral life, again in a perceptible way - whether it be, for example, that God appears in the burning bush, or that He moves about among men in manifest human shape, and that their ears can hear Him telling them what to do and what not to do.”⁵

Perhaps it may seem a little odd that Steiner puts so much emphasis on such things as hands, eyes, ears, etc. in relation to inner images. In the course of his years, he often spoke about the necessity of developing “sensefree thinking,” i.e. a more flexible kind of mental activity that is less dependent upon the grey braincells. (It ought to be taken note here of the fact that Anthroposophy views the brain as a sense organ, so that thoughts are perceived by the brain just like sounds are perceived by the ear.) Many of his utterances appear absurd when they are approached with a thinking that is spellbound by the physical brain because they aim to give the listener inner pictures that do not reflect anything sensory, and thereby contribute to the development of sensefree thinking.

The metaphysical realist does not think any more sensefree than the naïve realist is doing. He only projects physical concepts to a metaphysical plane:

⁵ *Die Philosophie der Freiheit* 1894, GA #4: kap. 10: *Freiheitsphilosophie*

to the extent it is possible to determine such things, should say if the word ‘individualistic anarchist’ can be applied to me, I would have to answer with an unequivocal ‘yes’.”¹¹

Mackay’s theoretical anarchism had many features in common with *The Philosophy of Freedom*. Steiner believed, however, that he had shown in his book that thinking was a spiritual activity and that the human spirit could create free actions only through a developed thinking. It is probable that Mackay could not understand this concept of Steiner - there was in fact nobody who understood it at that time - but he seems to have been closer to Steiner in other areas.

Mackay had political ambitions with his theories, and he wanted Steiner’s support and cooperation. It was a time when Steiner presented his ethical individualism as a political ideal, and it looks as if he felt tempted to use his own philosophy as a platform for Mackay’s political dreams. His description of this episode in his autobiography 30 years later makes it clear that he experienced the inclination as a temptation or spiritual trial:

”Through my experience with J.H. Mackay and Stirner, my destiny caused me once more to enter a world of thought where I had to go through a *spiritual test*. Ethical individualism, as I had elaborated it, is the reality of moral life experienced purely within the human soul. Nothing was further from my intention in elaborating this conception than to make it the basis for a purely political view. But at this time, about 1898, my soul with its conception of ethical individualism, was to be dragged into a kind of abyss. From being a purely individual experience within the human soul, it was to become something theoretical and external. The esoteric was to be diverted into the exoteric.”¹² From then onward, he decided to tread his own paths.

¹¹ *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Zeitgeschichte 1887-1901*, GA 31, p. 261.

¹² *Mein Lebensgang*, GA #28, ch. 28.

instincts) and of obedient behavior (following moral standards) as necessary preparatory stages of morality, but it also sees that both these transitory stages can be overcome by the free spirit. Monism frees the truly moral world conception both from the mundane fetters of naïve moral maxims and from the transcendental moral maxims of the speculative metaphysician. Monism can no more eliminate the former from the world than it can eliminate percepts; it rejects the latter because it seeks all the principles for the elucidation of the world phenomena within that world, and none outside it.”¹⁰

Steiner’s anarchist milieu. Tucker and Mackay.

Between 1890 and 1897 Steiner lived in Weimar, and at this time he became interested in Max Stirner’s radical individualistic-anarchist writings. He had written a book about Nietzsche, but ended up preferring Stirner’s crystal clear thoughts and courage for freedom.

During the fall of 1898, when living in Berlin, Steiner became acquainted with the Scottish-German poet and Stirner-biographer John Henry Mackay and his friend Benjamin Rickertson Tucker. A very good friendship developed among Steiner, Mackay, and Tucker.

Magazin für Literatur was banned in Russia because the editor Rudolf Steiner was a friend of the anarchist John Henry Mackay. The situation did not exactly improve when Steiner wrote in his column that he regarded himself as an individualistic anarchist:

”Until now, I have myself always avoided using the words ‘individualistic’ or ‘theoretical anarchism’ to describe my world view. Because I care very little for such labels. But if I,

¹⁰ Ibid.

”The highest stage of development of naïve realism in the sphere of morality is that where the moral commandment (moral idea) is separated from every being other than oneself and is thought of, hypothetically, as being an absolute power in one’s own inner life. What man first took to be the external voice of God, he now takes as an independent power within him, and speaks of this inner voice in such a way as to identify it with conscience.

”But in doing this he has already gone beyond the stage of naïve consciousness into the sphere where the moral laws have become independently existing standards. There they are no longer carried by real bearers, but have become metaphysical entities existing in their own right. They are analogous to the invisible “visible forces” of metaphysical realism, which does not seek reality through the part of it that man has in his thinking, but hypothetically adds it on to actual experience. These extra-human moral standards always occur as accompanying features of metaphysical realism. For metaphysical realism is bound to seek the origin of morality in the sphere of extra-human reality.”⁶

Steiner argued that dialectical materialism made freedom impossible because it enslaved thinking in a mechanical universe. He continues:

”If the hypothetically assumed entity is conceived as in itself unthinking, acting according to purely mechanical laws, as materialism would have it, then it must also produce out of itself, by purely mechanical necessity, the human individual with all his characteristic features. The consciousness of freedom can then be nothing more than an illusion. For though I consider myself the author of my action, it is the matter of which I am composed and the movements going on in it that are working in me. I believe myself free; but in fact all my actions are noth-

und Monismus.

⁶ Ibid.

ing but the result of the material processes which underlie my physical and mental organization. It is said that we have the feeling of freedom only because we do not know the motives compelling us.”⁷

After that, Steiner confronts spiritualistic dualism. Today, this variety is better known as religious fundamentalism:

”Whereas the materialistic dualist makes man an automaton whose actions are only the result of a purely mechanical system, the spiritualistic dualist (that is, one who sees the Absolute, the Being-in-itself, as something spiritual in which man has no share in his conscious experience) makes him a slave to the will of the Absolute. As in materialism, so also in one-sided spiritualism, in fact in any kind of metaphysical realism inferring but not experiencing something extra-human as the true reality, freedom is out of the question.

”Metaphysical as well as naïve realism, consistently followed out, must deny freedom for one and the same reason: they both see man as doing no more than putting into effect, or carrying out, principles forced upon him by necessity. Naïve realism destroys freedom by subjecting man to the authority of a perceptible being or of one conceived on the analogy of a perceptible being, or eventually to the authority of the abstract inner voice which it interprets as ‘conscience’; the metaphysician, who merely infers the extra-human reality, cannot acknowledge freedom because he sees man as being determined, mechanically or morally, by a ‘Being-in-itself’.”⁸

The core in Rudolf Steiner’s monism is the sovereign independence of the single individual in thinking as well as in doing. The human being itself and nothing else is the determining factor with regard to moral behavior:

”The moral laws which the metaphysician who works by mere inference must regard as issuing from a higher power,

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

are, for the adherent of monism, thoughts of men; for him the moral world order is neither the imprint of a purely mechanical natural order, nor that of an extra-human world order, but through and through the free creation of men. It is not the will of some being outside him in the world that man has to carry out, but his own; he puts into effect his own resolves and intentions, not those of another being. Monism does not see, behind man’s actions, the purposes of a supreme directorate, foreign to him and determining him according to its will, but rather sees that men, in so far as they realize their intuitive ideas, pursue only their own human ends. Moreover, each individual pursues his own particular ends. For the world of ideas comes to expression, not in a community of men, but only in human individuals. What appears as the common goal of a whole group of people is only the result of the separate acts of will of its individual members, and in fact, usually of a few outstanding ones who, as their authorities, are followed by the others. Each one of us has it in him to be a free spirit, just as every rose bud has in it a rose.”⁹

Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution holds a central position in Rudolf Steiner’s philosophy. For him, the moral development of the soul was the most important aspect of evolution, and for this reason, he was confident that human beings would develop their free spirits through the experiences of life.

Steiner writes on:

”Monism knows that Nature does not send man forth from her arms ready made as a free spirit, but that she leads him up to a certain stage from which he continues to develop still as an unfree being until he comes to the point where he finds his own self.

”Monism is quite clear that a being acting under physical or moral compulsion cannot be a truly moral being. It regards the phases of automatic behavior (following natural urges and in-

⁹ Ibid.